South Lake Union Height and Density

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Scope

The South Lake Union Height and Density EIS will evaluate how potential increases in height and density in the South Lake Union Urban Center advance the goals of the City's Comprehensive Plan and the recently adopted South Lake Union Urban Center Plan. Specific goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the Urban Center Plan include:

- Ensuring adequate zoned development capacity for long-term growth consistent with the designation of this neighborhood as one of the City's six urban centers.
- Using increases in height and density to achieve other neighborhood plan goals such as increasing the amount of affordable housing, open space, and other public benefits through an incentive zoning program.
- Using increases in height and density to promote a neighborhood form that contributes to livability while accommodating anticipated growth in jobs and housing consistent with the neighborhoods' Urban Center designation.
- Determining how to best accommodate growth while maintaining a functional transportation system, including the street network, transit, and non-motorized modes of travel. Similarly, determine how to accommodate growth while maintaining the functional capacity of utility systems, including electrical energy, water, sewer and storm drain systems.

EIS Alternatives

DPD proposes studying four alternative approaches to height and density in the South Lake Union Neighborhood. Alternatives 1 and 2 increase height and density for both residential and commercial uses. Alternative 3 increases height and density primarily for residential uses. Alternative 4 is a "no action" alternative and uses existing zoning and height limits. Each alternative will be further refined by estimates of commercial and residential floor area likely to be built through the year 2030. As part of the EIS analysis, the EIS team will refine assumptions needed for each element of the environment (e.g. percent area of green roof, number of affordable housing units produced, vehicle miles traveled, etc) in consultation with City staff. A summary of the assumptions will be incorporated into the EIS description of alternatives.

Elements of the Environment

Through scoping DPD has identified areas of likely environmental impact and elements of the environment to be studied in the EIS. Below is a summary of the issues that the EIS will study:

1. Land Use

No land use compatibility issues are expected to result from the project that are not already possible under current zoning. The land use analysis will focus on the consistency of each alternative with existing state, regional, and local planning policies including policies related to the Kenmore Air flight path.

2. Housing
   Assess potential impacts on affordable housing under each alternative. Data includes the number of existing affordable units, total number of existing residential units, and number of units planned or permitted but not yet constructed. The analysis will estimate the total number of affordable and market rate units that could be built under each alternative.

3. Aesthetics and Urban Design
   Through Three Dimensional modeling, shade and shadow analysis, compare the urban form impacts of each alternative at build-out including impacts to SEPA protected public viewpoints and corridors. Evaluate how pedestrians would experience new development including an analysis of shade and shadow impacts at the street level and on important public spaces such as Lake Union Park, Denny Park, and Cascade Park.

4. Transportation
   The transportation analysis will examine vehicular traffic levels-of-service in the year 2030 under each alternative. The transportation analysis will also examine impacts on transit, pedestrian, and bicycle travel, and parking impacts. The parking analysis will rely on recent studies and planning for parking in the SLU area. The transportation analysis will be undertaken in close coordination with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT).

5. Open Space and Recreation
   Growth under any of the alternatives will affect demand for passive and active recreation opportunities. The EIS will examine expected impacts on existing recreation facilities, and examine existing policies for addressing recreation needs.

6. Public Services and Utilities
   City staff will be primary resources for forecasting demand and evaluating adequacy of existing public services and utilities. The consultant will develop demand estimates in consultation with City staff, and work with City staff to identify any critical facilities needed to meet the projected demand.

   - Electricity demand and electrical distribution infrastructure will be evaluated to determine whether additional facilities will be needed to support the level of development anticipated under each alternative.

   - Stormwater and wastewater infrastructure in the area has been thoroughly studied and many improvements have been made or are planned. The EIS will examine existing and

proposed infrastructure and additional demand anticipated to determine whether any adverse impacts can be expected from development under any of the alternatives.

- Redevelopment would increase the demand for police, emergency services, and schools. The EIS will provide a projection of additional demand based on population and employment growth in the area.
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7. Soils/Geology

   The EIS will analyze risks associated with construction of housing and other uses in liquefaction prone areas adjacent to Lake Union. Other potentially critical geologic hazard areas that will be studied include small steep slope areas and known slides near the freeway and constraints posed by high water tables. Erosion impacts would not be affected by any of the proposed alternatives.

8. Water

   Stormwater quality and runoff rates under current standards will be compared for each of the proposed alternatives. This analysis requires an understanding of the existing problems with stormwater handling in the area and planning currently underway to solve these issues.

9. Air

   Local air quality impacts from vehicle emissions under each alternative will be modeled at three hot spots, such as I-5 on-ramps at Mercer and Denny at Aurora.

10. Greenhouse Gas (GHC)

    GHG impacts will be estimated using the King County GHG emissions worksheet as a starting point. The assumptions in the worksheet will need to be adjusted to more closely reflect the conditions that exist under current regulations as well as the results that could be expected with stricter energy efficiency requirements for buildings and vehicles. The assumptions for vehicle miles traveled should also be assessed to determine whether the worksheet assumptions would reflect the type of vehicle use anticipated in South Lake Union under each alternative.

11. Environmental Health

    Using existing studies that have been performed for numerous projects in the area provide an overview of the types of contaminants likely to be encountered and determine whether any of the alternatives would affect the likelihood of human exposure to toxics or other environmental risks.

12. Noise

    Evaluate whether noise sources, such as I-5, Aurora Avenue, or major arterials would adversely affect residences or other sensitive receptors under each of the alternatives. Evaluate potential of noise impacts on residential uses adjacent to Kenmore Air flight path.

13. Plants and Animals

    Assess potential impacts to species and habitats that are listed on federal threatened or endangered species list, or on the state Priority Habitat and Species list. Compare the impacts of each alternative, including potential benefits of standards for landscaping that could accompany rezones.

14. Historic and Cultural Resources

    Using existing studies prepared for numerous projects in the area, prepare an assessment of potential impacts to historic and cultural resources that could result from each alternative. No new historic building surveys or physical investigations of cultural resources are anticipated.